11: League of Nations--54 [4] G-5 (no date) 1937 Laotians
116, 342, 352

"The houses in Lao are square with a fairly large veranda serving as a hall, reception room and weaving-room. The interior is divided into two parts by partitions of planking or bamboo; one part is the common room, while the other consists of small rooms for the women.

The veranda is reached by a staircase, and a second staircase leads to a small open-air platform at the other end of the house which serves as a kitchen.

There is no furniture. Mats and quilts are spread on the floor."

23: Franck--269 T-2 (1924) 1926 Laotians
116, 342, 352, 361 Ethnic subgroup

"Though I only suspected it then, I was destined to know Nam-lien [EJ: a 'Black Miao' village in Laos.] better than I know my own birthplace, nay, than Paris or Rio de Janeiro. It consisted of a dozen thatched huts with earth floor and wattled walls on either side of the wide space that served as road, one of them the sala or rest-house for French travelers. Two bare-woven bamboo cots and a rough wooden table comprised the furnishings of this, unless one also counted the soft layer of dust on the earth floor as a rug. A few things such as eggs were purchasable about the village--though I should have been in hard luck indeed if I had not taken official advice and brought a few canned supplies with me--and a native was available to boil water and do the simplest form of cooking."

25: Brodrick--101 [2] S-3 (1939) 1948 Laotians
116, 262, 272, 342, 352

"[HD: The Laotian's] bamboo house on stumpy piles costs nothing to make. He has no furniture, no chairs, no tables. He sleeps on a mat. There may be a few bowls in his hut, but most of the meal is served on palm-leaves. His food is simple--rice, salt fish in brine, raw pork chopped up and smothered in a pungent, aromatic sauce, cakes of rice and bananas (and delicious they are), and he eats iguanas, alligator's eggs and red ants.

When he is not swigging lao, or rice-alcohol, he drinks water and uses tea--Laotian tea is poor stuff--as we did until a few generations ago, as medicine."

633 be seen from a great distance. To be sure, it extends over a prodigi-
174 ous area and is so large that one would take it for a city... The king's
344 apartments, which are embellished with a superb and magnificent portico and a large number of beautiful rooms accompanied by a large parlor, are all made of wood which will not decay and ornamented inside and outside with excellent bas-reliefs so delicately gilded that they seem rather to be covered with flakes of gold than gold leaf.

"From that point one enters the courtyards which are extremely spacious, and one first sees a long line of houses built entirely of brick and roofed /113/ with tile in which the second wives usually stay, and outside another row of houses built alongside in the same symmetry for the mandarins' officers. I could write a whole volume if I undertook a minute description of all the other parts of the palace, the riches, the departments, the gardens and a number of other such things...

565 "The houses of the principal lords and of well-to-do persons are
342 very high and beautiful, and are all made of wood with a great deal
352 of artifice and a greater or lesser number of ornaments, depending on the expense to which the individuals are willing to go, but I must confess that the common people and the poor are housed extremely badly
/793/ and that their dwellings are cabins and huts rather than houses. Only the talapoins (bonzes), who are the priests of the idols, have permission to build their monasteries and houses out of brick and stone. Instead of rugs and other such furnishings, persons of quality use small reed mats in which the weave is so delicate and so highly ornamented with figures and various leaf patterns that, to my mind, there is nothing more beautiful nor more pleasing to the eye. They ordinarily use them to cover the walls of /114/ their rooms and houses inside and outside, which they keep very clean and of which they take particular care...

643* "The king is absolute and independent... all the land belongs to
/423/ him, and he disposes as absolute lord of all that his subjects possess...
631 offices, employment, honors and wealth depend absolutely on the
174 king, who raises those persons who please him most to the highest offices in the kingdom.... The principal dignities and offices of the kingdom are eight in number. The first is that of viceroy general... and because the kingdom is divided into seven provinces seven other viceroys are appointed... there are also other governments of less consequence which depend on the former both in respect to civil affairs and to those which concern war.... Each of these provinces has
/701/ its militia, which consists of infantry and cavalry.

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342

which form the private home of the house's inhabitants.

A sort of stairway without railings or a ladder gives access to the veranda from one of the short sides of the rectangle. Often a second ladder leads to a small uncovered platform [183] situated at the other end of the house. This, so to speak, is the service stairway, for the platform serves as a kitchen or storeroom and for various private uses.

Inside the house is divided into two parts by a longitudinal partition pierced by openings which give access to compartments used as bedrooms. The corridor [Illustration here] left free between the partition and the opposite wall constitutes the common room, and is provided with one or several rectangular hearths. The floor of the verandas, the bedrooms and the common room is covered with mats.

[352]

Furnishings are generally scanty, and consist of mattresses, pillows, cushions, footstools, low stools, blankets, chests, etc.

[343]

The space under the house serves as a stable or barn for horses and livestock, a poultry house and a pigsty. The animals are shut up there each night.

[286]

[184] Looms for weaving may be found either under the veranda or underneath the house.

[343]

The storehouse for paddy is found nearby. It is also mounted on piles and may be built in a rectangular or circular shape. The "hand" or "foot" mortars used to decorticate paddy may either be near the storehouse under an addition, or else under the house.

342-
[804]

The dimensions of houses are reckoned in Hon or units as long as the span of the arms (1.8 to two meters). Houses may be anywhere from two to eight or nine hons (4 to 20 meters) in length. Their width varies from two to three spans of the arms on the average (four to six meters), not including verandas.

Strictly speaking, the piles are columns which rise from the ground to the tie-beams of the roof trusses. Mortises are cut in them a meter of two above the ground, and the floor joists fitted into the mortises.

Even as they are, these houses resist high winds. They provide good shelter from the sun, rain, etc. and are sufficiently comfortable, even for Europeans. The latter often have to be contented with such houses and can find little fault with them except the instability of the floor and the narrowness of the windows, which makes the inside somewhat dark.

149: Reinach--247 G-3 (no date) 1901 AM1 Indochina
Laotians AM8

"What makes everything easy and is used for everything is this hollow wood, at once so solid and so light, the incomparable bamboo. In France we see it only in the form of pleasant but useless little articles of furniture. Here bamboo is sufficient to every task. It provides the whole house, frame as well as walls. The inner walls and floors are made of matted bamboo lathwork. Yet such a house, with its furniture, bed, tables, various accessories and its luxury objects, if you are a person of refinement, can be improvised for you in a space of two hours wherever you want.

"Has a bridge been washed out? In two hours, thanks to this wood which is easy to manage and to work, men will have made a new bridge. One is especially struck, at the beginning of this life which is so free and, more than any other, independent of men and things, by the great simplicity and ingenuity of all the procedures. Objects are rudimentary but practical, easy to make, soon ready and simple to repair. Everyone knows how to build ordinary furnishings, and no interruptions are caused here as they are when even the slightest damage occurs to one of our highly developed utensils, which only a specialist knows how to repair.

"A bamboo tube is a safe place for your maps and papers. It is a drinking glass, and it is also a pipe for smokers. On a larger scale, it is a bucket for carrying water, and the receptacle for all liquid and solid provisions. When provided with a handle it serves as a pot for the Laotians to cook their rice in, or to prepare syrup from the sugar palm. When torn into thongs it is used as rope and string. Ligatures of sapeks are threaded on kelates, or bamboo filaments, and this is what makes our new Indo-Chinese sou, with its round hole in the middle, so impractical. Those who preside over the striking of our coins are unaware that the kelate is square, a fact which the first comer from the interior could have told them. Baskets of all kinds are made with these same kelates for holding and transporting material. Hats are also made of them to provide shelter from the sun and rain. At night, when the stage of your journey is too long and you have to continue after nightfall even at the risk of meeting a tiger, setting fire to a bamboo branch is enough to frighten any off and to light your way. And not only is bamboo used to make torches, hats, string, dishes, furniture, houses and bridges, but it also serves as animal fodder and even as food for the natives, who eat the tenderest shoots as we would eat asparagus.

Meo

516 progresses at an even, elongated pace, carrying as much as 30 kilo-
417 grams in his pack without even seeming to suspect the feats of strength,
[132] suppleness and balance which he accomplishes. As long as he remains on high ground his resistance to fatigue is very great indeed, but he cannot go down to the lowlands without danger, especially in the hot season.

101 Certain authors claim that the word "Meo" which, when pronounced with a certain intonation, means cat in several Indo-Chinese languages, was given to these folk by reason of their agility. However, we must note that in [109] Laotian the word "Meo" used to designate these mountainfolk is neither written or pronounced like the word meo which is used to designate cats. There is the same difference between these two words as there is in French between the words maitre and metre.

342 A Meo house is built at ground level on slightly leveled ground. The walls are made of puddled clay or of ill-fitting boards, and the house is roofed with thatch or crudely-squared wooden shingles. The doors are made of wood which has been shaped with an ax, and there
[592] are no windows. Often several families live in the same house, and then each has a fireplace to itself and a compartment which serves it as a bedroom. In the common room there is an oven and fireplaces above which objects are placed to dry on a bamboo framework. Behind the house a narrow passageway is left free separating the
[343] building from the sheer mountainside. In front there is a narrow veranda where the horses are kept when they are not housed in a stable built on piles and overhanging the mountainside, as are the animal barn and pig sty, the rice granary and the goat pen. This system has the advantage of protecting the animals from the dampness of the ground, since the planks which form the floor jut out over empty space on their solid piles.

[101] Inside the house there are a few furnishings, as among all peoples of Chinese origin. There are benches, tables, camp beds, dishes,
• 352 iron and copper cooking utensils and opium smoking accessories, all
356 so repulsively filthy that even the least delicate would hesitate to enter and stay in these hovels, where vermin swarm under the protection of the ancestors' altar.

198 Although amongh themselves and with their families the Meos
212 speak a rather unharmonious language, nearly all the men can understand and speak Qouane-hoa, the language of the Chinese mandarins, which is the official language in Yunnan. They can neither read nor write Chinese characters, and have no system of writing of their own.